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FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

OUTREACHER

SPECIAL BALLOT ISSUE

AUGUST 1987

Great Decisions '87

NATIONAL OPINION BALLOT REPORT of the Foreign Policy Association

August 1987: *Following are highlights of views expressed by participants in the nationwide* **Great Decisions** *program for 1987. This report is based on 53,259 Opinion Ballots cast as of May 31, 1987. The ballots were tabulated under the supervision of Esther Fleishman, former vice president of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.*

Ballots are part of the **Great Decisions '87** *briefing book, prepared by the editors of the national, nonpartisan Foreign Policy Association. The 96-page book includes impartial background and analyses of eight critical foreign policy issues facing the United States. More than 250,000 Americans joined in study and discussion of the eight topics during February and March. This is the 33rd year of the nationwide* **Great Decisions** *study and discussion program, the largest citizen education program of its kind in the country.*

Topic 1: THE CONSTITUTION AND FOREIGN POLICY
The Role of Law in International Relations

Issue A

The Constitution provides for power to be shared by the executive and legislative branches of government in the making of foreign policy. The question put to participants in the 1987 Great Decisions program was, in effect, about the proper balance between the two branches of government in the execution of foreign policy. In answering the question, respondents gave conflicting signals. By a margin of almost three to one, respondents indicated that the President should *not* have a freer hand to make foreign policy. On the other hand, respondents, by margins of roughly two to one, agreed *both* that Congress should play a more active role in foreign-policy making (68%) and that the present balance of power between the President and Congress in making foreign policy was about right (63%).

The effect of outside events has always been a problem for public opinion analysts because it is difficult to assess and measure the impact of such events on public opinion and risky to attribute the expression of particular attitudes to certain happenings. In the case of the Iran-contra affair, however, one can safely assume that participants were aware of the events as they unfolded almost daily in the media throughout most of the balloting period, January through May.

Issue B

Respondents were asked to express their agreement or disagreement on four aspects of the role of international law in foreign-policy making. Responses clearly indicated a preference for a U.S. foreign policy that obeys international law, however imperfect that law may be.

Strong majorities, 86% and 78% respectively, favored obeying international law as a matter of principle: to provide an example to other countries, and because the alternative is to promote international lawlessness. When adherence to international law was put in more pragmatic terms, that is, when adherence to international law was tied to advancing U.S. national interests, the majority in favor fell to 57%.

Only 19% agreed that international law was irrelevant to U.S. foreign policy because law cannot resolve most important issues.

Topic 1 Statistics: 2,743 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. Public opinion plays an important role in the struggle for power to make foreign policy. In your opinion, what changes should take place?

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. The present balance of power between the President and Congress in making foreign policy is about right	22	41	26	11
b. Congress should play a more active role in foreign-policy making	28	40	22	10
c. The President should have a freer hand to make foreign policy	8	20	37	35

Issue B. With regard to the role of international law in foreign policy, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Obey international law, however imperfect, because the alternative is to promote international lawlessness	39	39	16	6
b. Obey international law in order to provide an example for other countries to follow	39	47	10	4
c. Obey international law when it advances U.S. national interests	27	30	24	20
d. Consider international law irrelevant to U.S. foreign policy, as most of the important issues cannot be resolved by means of law	5	14	26	55

Topic 2: DEFENSE AND THE FEDERAL DEFICIT
U.S. Needs, Soviet Challenges

Respondents were presented with a range of four options for dealing with the Federal deficit. All options focused on levels of defense spending—from spending as much as the Administration thinks is necessary for maintaining security, to cutting the defense budget and reordering defense priorities. The largest number, 39%, chose the last-mentioned option, while only 8% were prepared to give the Administration a free hand on matters of defense spending. Intermediate positions of holding defense spending to current levels or making across-the-board budget cuts, including spending for defense, were taken by 26% and 19% respectively.

Topic 2 Statistics: 3,166 Ballots Tabulated

In setting Federal spending levels, the U.S. should:

	%
1. Spend as much on defense as the Administration considers necessary for security and reduce the Federal deficit by making cuts in nondefense areas.	8
2. Hold defense spending to current levels, adjusting for inflation, and tailor U.S. strategy and commitments to match available resources.	26
3. Reduce the Federal deficit by making across-the-board budget cuts, including defense.	19
4. Cut the defense budget and reorder defense priorities.	39
5. Other.	6

Topic 3: EGYPT AND THE UNITED STATES
Uneasy Relations

Issue A

Egypt was perceived as a valuable ally of the United States by a strong majority of respondents, both in strategic and economic terms.

By a strong majority (88%), respondents favored the United States seeking continued military cooperation with Egypt: 75% favored reducing pressure on Egypt to conform to U.S. policies; and 68% favored reducing Egypt's debt burden.

When strengthening relations with Egypt was made conditional upon the United States distancing itself from Israel, support for such a policy dropped to 61%. When it was suggested that U.S. aid to Egypt be tied to Egypt's improving relations with Israel, support for such a policy dropped still further, to a slim majority of 55%.

The suggestion that the United States distance itself from Egypt in recognition of Egypt's need to improve relations with its Arab neighbors received only scant agreement: 26% of the respondents.

Issue B

Respondents who viewed Egypt as a valuable U.S. ally were prepared to back up their support in tangible ways. Only 34% agreed that U.S. aid to Egypt should be substantially reduced. The largest majority, 87%, were in favor of tying aid to Egypt's adopting a sound program of economic reforms; 79% were in favor of increased aid for economic but not military projects; and 60% were in favor of aid on a cash grant basis. The latter runs counter to U.S. policy and would bring aid more in line with the aid program for Israel. When it was suggested that aid to Egypt be made conditional upon Egypt's improving relations with Israel, support dropped off (57%). Less than half (45%) agreed that aid should be given only for projects approved by the Agency for International Development.

Topic 3 Statistics: 3,590 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. The U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Strengthen ties to Egypt even if it means distancing itself from Israel.	19	43	27	12
b. Reduce Egypt's debt burden.	17	51	24	8
c. Reduce pressure on Egypt to conform to U.S. policies.	25	50	20	5
d. Seek Egypt's continued military cooperation.	42	46	10	3
e. Tie U.S. aid to Egypt's improving relations with Israel.	16	39	33	12
f. Distance itself from Egypt, recognizing that Egypt's priority is to improve relations with its Arab neighbors.	5	21	38	37

Issue B. U.S. aid to Egypt should be:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Given on a cash grant basis (rather than for projects designated by the U.S.) in recognition of Egypt's need for aid and its regional importance.	18	42	26	14
b. Given only for projects approved by AID.	11	34	40	15
c. Tied to Egypt's adopting a sound program of economic reforms.	36	51	11	2
d. Tied to Egypt's improving relations with Israel.	14	43	32	10
e. Substantially reduced.	8	26	44	23
f. Increased for economic, not military, projects.	35	44	16	6

Topic 4: THE PACIFIC BASIN
Alliances, Trade and Bases

Issue A

In a series of seven policy options rating the effectiveness of strengthening the U.S. role in the Pacific Basin, no single option was rated as very effective by even a majority. The proposition favoring U.S. support of a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific, which is contrary to current U.S. policy, received the highest percentage rating (47%). The next largest plurality (37%) rated as very effective U.S. negotiation of force reductions of Pacific fleets with the Soviet Union. Opinion on all policy options was highly diffuse, each option being rated very, somewhat, or not very effective by roughly one third of respondents.

The items that respondents were asked to rate were highly specific: Should the United States press Japan to assume a greater share of the defense of the Pacific? make concessions to New Zealand to repair the ANZUS alliance? support the democratic opposition in countries with authoritarian leaders?

Attitudes regarding the U.S. role in the Pacific Basin are not crystallized, and perhaps lack the salience for respondents that issues regarding the Middle East, Central Asia or South Africa have in shaping foreign policy.

Issue B

While positions were weakly held on strategic questions in the Pacific Basin, they were strongly felt on economic issues.

Strongest agreement was expressed for two propositions that placed the responsibility for its economic well-being on the United States. One called on the United States to make its own goods and services more competitive in international trade (98%), and the other called for the United States to adhere to a policy of reciprocal free trade (87%).

Very strong support was expressed for two other propositions that said, on the one hand, let's wait and see whether Japan and other countries open their markets wider before imposing protectionist policies (77%) and, on the other hand, the United States should not impose protectionist policies at all, because they will not solve the trade deficit problem (75%). Only 56% opted for protecting U.S. industries against foreign competition in retaliation against other countries that protect their industries.

While positions were not always consistent—with strong majorities both pro- and anti-protectionist—respondents forcefully registered their sentiments. They said, in effect, that it matters less what steps the United States takes than that it does everything possible to solve what are perceived as very serious problems.

Topic 4 Statistics: 3,502 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. How would you rate the following policies in terms of their effectiveness in strengthening the U.S. role in the Pacific Basin? The U.S. should:

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
	%	%	%
a. Maintain the present policy of not disclosing whether a ship is carrying nuclear weapons	31	33	36
b. Press Japan to assume a greater share of the defense of the Pacific	34	44	22
c. Make concessions to New Zealand to repair the ANZUS alliance	32	40	28
d. Negotiate force reductions of Pacific fleets with the Soviet Union	37	38	26
e. Support a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific	47	28	25
f. Support the democratic opposition in countries with authoritarian leaders	25	46	28
g. Support governments that share U.S. strategic goals, regardless of their politics	26	39	35

Issue B. For the following trade issues, please indicate your reaction by checking one column for every policy option listed.

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. The U.S. should protect its industries against foreign competition since other countries protect theirs.	18	38	28	16
b. The U.S. should wait and see whether Japan and other countries open their markets wider to U.S. exports before imposing protectionist measures.	33	44	16	7
c. The U.S. should adhere to a policy of reciprocal free trade.	49	38	11	2
d. The U.S. should not impose protectionist policies because they will not solve the problem of the trade deficit.	40	35	20	5
e. The U.S. should seek ways to make U.S. goods and services more competitive in international trade.	83	15	2	1

Topic 5: SOUTH AFRICA
Apartheid Under Siege

Issue A

What should be the primary goal of United States policy toward South Africa? Respondents were offered six goals that the United States could adopt, and were asked to rank them in order of importance. Respondents ranked them in the following order:

Ensure peaceful change	1
End apartheid	2
Protect minority rights	3
Improve relations with the frontline states	4
Release Nelson Mandela	5
Prevent communism	6

Issue B

When asked to rate five policies in terms of their effectiveness in ending apartheid, strongest support was expressed for assistance in negotiating a power-sharing arrangement; 44% considered this very effective, and 43% somewhat effective. Divestiture was deemed very effective by only 8%. Aid to nongovernmental democratic groups was seen as very effective (27%) or somewhat effective (53%), whereas more sweeping economic sanctions and constructive engagement were seen as only somewhat or not very effective.

Topic 5 Statistics: 3,252 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. What should be the primary goal of U.S. policy toward South Africa? Rank the following from "1" (most important) to "6" (least important).

a. Improve relations with the frontline states	4
b. Release Nelson Mandela	5
c. End apartheid	2
d. Prevent communism	6
e. Ensure peaceful change	1
f. Protect minority rights	3

Issue B. How would you rate the following policies in terms of their effectiveness in ending apartheid? Please check one column for every policy option listed.

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
	%	%	%
a. Constructive engagement	15	42	43
b. Divestiture	8	50	42
c. Aid to nongovernmental democratic groups	27	53	20
d. More sweeping economic sanctions	17	38	45
e. Assistance in negotiating a power-sharing arrangement	44	43	13

Topic 6: FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES
The Selling of America?

Issues A and B

Respondents were offered a range of four options regarding U.S. policy toward foreign investment in the United States, and were asked to select the one that came closest to reflecting their own opinion. The choices offered ran the gamut from encouraging foreign investment without discrimination, to restricting investments in the United States by foreign multinational corporations.

Both extremes were rejected and respondents came down squarely in the middle for foreign investment in the United States, but not without strings attached. 36% were in favor of welcoming foreign investment but increasing reporting requirements, and 35% favored passing reciprocity laws to encourage a more open global investment policy.

By an overwhelming majority (86%) respondents felt that, in general, foreign investment has been beneficial to the U.S. economy.

The Foreign Policy Association has carried out this national tabulation of opinion ballots as a public service. The results express the views of ***GREAT DECISIONS*** *participants, not those of the FPA, which is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization and takes no position on issues of U.S. foreign policy.*

Topic 6 Statistics: 3,308 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. With regard to U.S. policy toward foreign investment, the U.S. should:

	%
1. Encourage foreign investment and continue to follow a policy of nondiscrimination	15
2. Welcome foreign investment but increase reporting requirements	36
3. Pass reciprocity laws to encourage a more open global investment policy	35
4. Restrict investments by foreign multinational corporations in the U.S.	8
5. Other	6

Issue B. In general, foreign investment in the U.S.:

1. Has been beneficial to the U.S. economy	86
2. Has been harmful to the U.S. economy	12
3. Other	2

Topic 7: PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN
Storm Over Southwest Asia

Issue A

Out of six policy options that the United States might adopt in its relations with Pakistan, respondents were asked to choose the one that came closest to their own opinion.

Embedded in the policy statements was a hierarchy of levels of U.S. support for the Zia government, from continued support of Pakistan, to abandoning Pakistan and allying itself with India. The one proposal that received substantial support (46%) was that the United States should continue giving aid in recognition of Pakistan's support for U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. Support for this proposal, however, could also be interpreted as a vote for the Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation.

Policies that supported punitive measures toward Pakistan unless Pakistan curbed its nuclear program or improved human rights received only 15% and 12% of the votes respectively.

Issue B

When respondents rated five policy options in terms of their probable effectiveness in furthering a settlement in Afghanistan, they seemed much surer of what would *not* be effective than what would be.

The largest percentage taking any position at all were 69% who regarded as not very effective the United States acquiescing in Soviet control of Afghanistan in return for Soviet concessions to the United States in another region. Bare majorities, 53% and 51% respectively, thought it was not very effective for the United States to make concessions in another region if the Soviets pull out of Afghanistan or for the United States to recognize an Afghan government in exile.

The one statement that drew more than token support as very effective (45%) was the proposition that the United States seek to have the mujahideen included in the UN-sponsored peace negotiations.

Topic 7 Statistics: 2,809 Ballots Tabulated

Issue A. In its relations with Pakistan, the U.S.:

	%
1. Should continue to support the Zia government	10
2. Should continue giving aid in recognition of Pakistan's support for U.S. policy toward Afghanistan	46
3. Should reduce or cut off aid unless Pakistan curbs its nuclear program	15
4. Should reduce or cut off aid unless Pakistan improves human rights	12
5. Should disassociate itself from the Zia government	5
6. Should ally itself with India instead of Pakistan	5
7. Other	7

Issue B. How would you rate the following policies in terms of their effectiveness in furthering a settlement in Afghanistan?

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective
	%	%	%
a. The U.S. should increase arms aid to the mujahideen	24	45	30
b. The U.S. should recognize an Afghan government in exile	15	34	51
c. The U.S. should seek to have the mujahideen included in the UN-sponsored peace negotiations	45	43	13
d. The U.S. should acquiesce in Soviet control if the Soviets make significant concessions to the U.S. in another region	7	24	69
e. The U.S. should make significant concessions in another region if the Soviets pull out of Afghanistan	15	31	53

Topic 8: DEALING WITH REVOLUTION
Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines

The framework for considering the issues in this question was the recent revolutions in Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines. In two of these countries, Iran and Nicaragua, the revolutions have brought to power governments hostile to the United States. It is in this light that the reactions to the policy options must be judged.

Respondents were virtually unanimous (94%) in saying that in dealing with revolutions in other countries the United States should maintain "cool and correct" relations with existing governments, urge reforms where needed, and keep lines open to moderate opposition groups; 79% agreed that there were limits to U.S. influence and that the United States should stay out of the domestic affairs of other countries to avoid breeding resentment, and only 24% agreed that the United States should support anti-Communist governments, regardless of their political systems, because that is the best way to counter Soviet expansionist aims. Only one policy option drew some agreement for supporting revolutions (58%)—when revolutions claim to aspire to freedom and human rights.

BACKGROUND ON BALLOT REPORT

The large number of ballots received made it necessary to make a scientific sample of the returns for tabulation. By randomly selecting one of every three ballots cast on the first topic and one of every two ballots cast on each of the other seven topics, for a total of 25,258 ballots tabulated (53,259 cast) by May 31, 1987, the results are the same as they would be if each ballot had been tabulated. Random selection affects only the cost of tabulation and not the representativeness of the opinions expressed.

Topic 8 Statistics: 2,888 Ballots Tabulated

In dealing with revolutions in other countries, the U.S. should:

	Agree Strongly	Agree Somewhat	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
	%	%	%	%
a. Stay out of the domestic affairs of other countries to avoid breeding resentment and because there are limits to U.S. influence	36	43	16	5
b. Maintain "cool and correct" relations with existing governments, urge reforms where needed and keep lines open to moderate opposition groups	53	41	5	1
c. Support revolutions that claim to aspire to freedom and human rights, because the U.S. should be a leader in opposing tyranny	17	41	27	14
d. Support anti-Communist governments, regardless of their political systems, because that is the best way to counter Soviet expansionist aims	6	18	26	50

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CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Those who filled out opinion ballots were asked to give some information about themselves.

All but 10% of the participants in the program had some college education; 65% had a baccalaureate or an advanced degree. More than half (56%) were 61 or over; only 18% were 30 or under. Women outnumbered men by three to two. A very high percentage of the group qualifies as foreign policy "opinion leaders" in the sense that they say they are asked for their opinion on foreign policy matters often (14%) or sometimes (47%).

This year the greatest numbers of ballots were received from Oregon, California, Illinois, New York, Colorado, Ohio, Virginia, Arizona, Florida and Pennsylvania, in that order.

A. How many years have you participated in the Great Decisions program (that is, attended one or more discussion sessions)?

	%
1. This is the first year I have participated.	36
2. I participated in one previous year.	15
3. I participated in more than one previous year.	49

B. What is your age?

1. 17 or under	3
2. 18 to 30	15
3. 31 to 45	9
4. 46 to 60	18
5. 61 or over	56

C. Your sex?

1. Female	61
2. Male	39

D. Are you currently a student?

1. Not a student	67
2. Enrolled in high school	4
3. Enrolled in college	14
4. Enrolled in graduate school	2
5. Enrolled in adult education course(s)	14

E. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

1. Some high school	4
2. High school graduate	6
3. Some college	24
4. College graduate	31
5. Advanced degree	34

F. How often are you asked for your opinion on foreign policy matters?

1. Often	14
2. Sometimes	47
3. Hardly ever	39

G. One final question. Would you say you have or have not changed your opinion in a fairly significant way as a result of taking part in the Great Decisions program?

1. Have	32
2. Have not	41
3. Uncertain	27

Totals may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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"JUST GET THEIR OPINION - DON'T TRY TO CHANGE IT!"